

REMARKS

The above amendments to the above-captioned application along with the following remarks are being submitted as a full and complete response to the Official Action dated September 20, 2006. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, the Examiner is respectfully requested to give due consideration to this application, to indicate the allowability of the claims, and to pass this case to issue.

Status of the Claims

Claims 17 and 19 are under consideration in this application. Claims 11, 13, 16 and 18 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 17 and 19 are being amended, as set forth in the above marked-up presentation of the claim amendments, in order to more particularly define and distinctly claim applicant's invention.

The claims are being amended to correct formal errors and/or to better recite or describe the features of the present invention as claimed. All the amendments to the claims are supported by the specification. Applicant hereby submits that no new matter is being introduced into the application through the submission of this response.

Formality Rejection

The Examiner objected to claims 13, 17 and 19 for informalities. As indicated, claim 13 is being amended as suggested by the Examiner and then incorporated into claim 19, and claims 17 and 19 are being amended as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, the withdrawal of the outstanding informality rejection is in order, and is therefore respectfully solicited.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 17 and 19 would be allowed if rewritten to overcome the claim objections and into independent form to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Since claims 17 and 19 are being rewritten to overcome the claim objections and into independent form to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, they are in condition for allowance.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 11 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by US. Pat. No. 6,862,067 to Matsumoto et al., and claims 16 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Matsumoto in view of US. Pat. No. 5,963,279 to Taguchi.

Since claims 11, 13, 16 and 18 are being cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejections thus become moot.

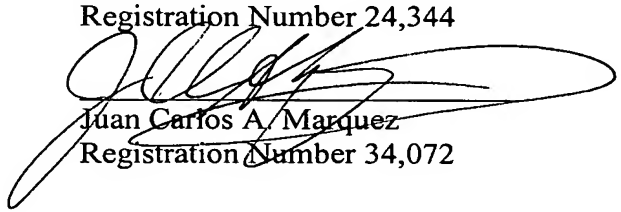
Conclusion

In view of all the above, clear and distinct differences as discussed exist between the present invention as now claimed and the prior art reference upon which the rejections in the Office Action rely, Applicants respectfully contend that the prior art references cannot anticipate the present invention or render the present invention obvious. Rather, the present invention as a whole is distinguishable, and thereby allowable over the prior art.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully solicited. Should there be any outstanding issues requiring discussion that would further the prosecution and allowance of the above-captioned application, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative at the address and phone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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